

LEG BANDAGES

BANDAGING YOUR HORSE'S LEGS

There may be any number of occasions when you will need or want to bandage your horse's legs. Bandaging can provide both protection and support for the horse while working, traveling, resting or recovering from an injury.

For whatever purpose, it is essential that you use proper leg bandaging techniques. Applied incorrectly, bandages may not only fail to do their job, they can cause discomfort, restrict blood flow and potentially cause discomfort, restrict blood flow and potentially damage tendons and other tissue.

It is often said that it is better to leave a horse's legs unbandaged than to bandage them incorrectly. Fortunately, there is nothing complicated about learning to do this. It simply takes the right materials and a bit of practice.

REASONS TO BANDAGE

Leg bandages are beneficial for several reasons:

- Provide support for tendons and ligaments during strenuous workouts
- Prevent or reduces swelling (edema) after exercise, injury or during stall rest
- Protect legs from concussion and impact
- Shield leg wounds from contamination and aid in healing

MATERIALS

A proper leg bandage generally has two or more layers: an ample amount of padding secured by a support bandage and sometimes a protective outer layer. If a wound is involved, gauze pads or a sterile, absorbent dressing may be required as well.

Padding is essential for protecting limbs. At least an inch or more of soft, cushioning material should be placed between the limb and the bandage to help disperse the pressure evenly and prevent blood flow from being restricted. Roll cotton, sheet cotton or leg quilts work well and are lightweight and comfortable.

Generally, the longer a bandage is to remain in place, the greater is the amount of padding needed.

There are many choices of bandaging materials, including track or polo wraps, cotton flannels, roll gauze or bandaging tapes such as 3M™ Vetrap™ Bandaging Tape, Elastikon™ and similar products.

The bandaging material should be at least two inches wide to avoid a tourniquet-like effect and allow for movement, and is less apt to cut off circulation as long as it is not pulled too tightly.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

If you have never bandaged a horse's legs before, ask your veterinarian or an experienced equine professional to demonstrate the proper techniques. Practice under his or her supervision before doing it on your own. Follow these basic guidelines:

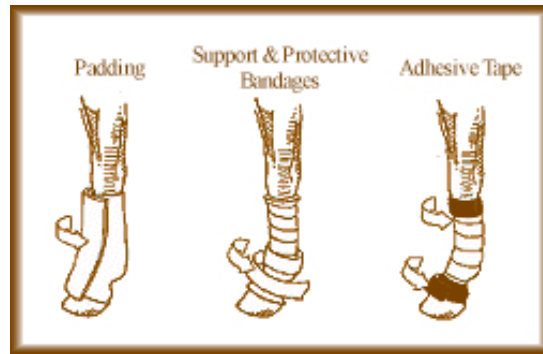
- Remove dirt, debris, soap residue or moisture to prevent skin irritation and dermatitis.

- Start with clean, dry legs and bandages.
- If there is a wound, make sure it has been properly cleaned, rinsed and dressed according to your veterinarian's recommendations.
- Use a thickness of an inch or more of soft, clean padding to protect the leg beneath the bandage.
- Apply padding so it lies flat and wrinkle-free against the skin.
- Start the wrap at the inside of the cannon bone above the fetlock joint. Do not begin or end over a joint as movement will tend to loosen the bandage and cause it to come unwrapped.
- Wrap the leg from front to back, outside to inside (counterclockwise in left legs, clockwise in right legs).
- Wrap in a spiral pattern, working down the leg and up again, overlapping the preceding layer by 50 percent.
- Use smooth, uniform pressure on the support bandage to compress the padding. Make sure no lumps or ridges form beneath the bandage.
- Be careful not to wrap the legs too tightly, creating pressure points.
- Avoid applying bandages too loosely. If loose bandages slip, they will not provide proper support and may endanger the horse.
- Leg padding and bandages should extend below the coronet band of the hoof to protect the area (especially important when trailering).
- Extend the bandages to within one half inch of the padding at the top and bottom.
- Check bandages daily to make sure they are securely in place and not cutting off circulation.
- If there is a potential problem with bedding or debris getting into the bandage, seal the openings with a loose wrap of flexible adhesive bandage such as Elastikon™ adhesive tape.
- Rewrap the legs every 1-2 days to minimize the chance of circulation problems caused by slippage, or skin irritation due to dirt or debris entering the bandages.
- Before rewrapping take a few minutes to examine the legs for any signs of heat, swelling or irritation. Problem areas are usually wet with perspiration.
- Allow the horse ample time to become accustomed to leg bandages before trailering, riding or leaving alone in a stall.

TALK WITH YOUR VETERINARIAN

If you have any further question or concerns about bandaging techniques, do not hesitate to contact

your veterinarian. As your animal health care partner, your equine practitioner has your horse's well being at heart. He or she is always happy to explain and demonstrate sound health care practices.



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